





The Hopes of Umbul Ponggok, Between Eco-Based Tourism and Mass Tourism

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Abstract. Klaten has a well-known water tourism in Central Java and is known as the City of 1001 Umbul (water springs), which is spread across various regions. One of them is in Ponggok Village, located in Polanharjo District, Klaten. This village is known as an ecological-based tourism village by developing various models of water tourism, one of which is Umbul Ponggok. This tour is often referred to as Bunaken van Klaten, which is well-developed and able to attract massive tourist interest. The purpose of this research is to analyze the management Umbul Ponggok in the context between eco-based tourism or mass tourism. This study used a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach which is used to view holistic information about the tourism model developed by a tourism village in the context of disaster risk mitigation and ecotourism. The result of the study shows that the management Umbul Ponggok, continues to strive to preserve nature by conserving water on the slopes of Mount Merapi and Merbabu. In addition, in developing this water-based tourism, Umbul Ponggok is very concerned about the sustainability of nature and the surrounding environment. Thus, updating and adding facilities that can support tourism needs have gone through disaster risk mitigation and ecotourism. In this research is known that developing tourism in Umbul Ponggok, it is based on ecotourism which uses the context of ecological tourism and empowerment of the surrounding community.

Keywords: Water tourism, Ecotourism, Mass Tourism

1 Introduction

Indonesia is a state with a natural tourism sector potentially beneficial in many regions. It is God's gift that can be used for the people's development [1]. It can be utilized, among others, through managing the tourism potency by involving the government and surrounding people which will have an impact on the economic, social, and cultural lives of the people in the region [2]. The natural tourism sector being the mainstay to be developed is water tourism; it corresponds to the condition of tourism starting to develop and strengthened by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Indonesian: *Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif* or *Kemendparekraf*) in the

presence of tourism activity roadmap and creating positive image to tourism existing in Indonesia by means of promotion to make it keep developing [3]. The attempt to conserve environment and local tourism is taken by means of exploring water resource that can attract tourists' interest massively. It is necessary to maximize the potency existing in the region. This tourism should prioritize natural conservation and minimizing the environmental effect. It is intended to enable tourists to enjoy this water tourism sustainability at any time [4].

The concept of water tourism development prioritizing the sustainability of tourism by considering natural conservation and surrounding community empowerment is ecotourism development [4]. However, in its development the water tourism prioritizes more the expansive tourism development to encourage many activities that can attract the tourists' interest massively or mass tourism pattern today [5]. If it occurs, the mass tourism with poor management will generate challenge or risk that will affect natural ecosystem and likewise, people surrounding [6].

Water tourism keeps developing in Indonesia today and involves the surrounding people's full contribution. It occurs in many areas existing in Klaten. Klaten is one of regencies located in Central Java called "Regency with one thousand and one *Umbul* (water springs)" spreading in seven sub districts: *Kebonarum*, *Karangmojo*, *Ngawen*, *Jatinom*, *Karanganom*, *Polanharjo*, and *Jolotundo* [7]. The term *umbul* derives from Javanese language "*umbul*" means water spring. One of *umbuls* booming and attracting tourists massively is *Umbul Ponggok* located in Ponggok Village, Polanharjo Sub District, Klaten Regency [8]. *Umbul Ponggok* offers clear underwater view originating from natural water spring existing at the bottom of pond and keeping to flow at any time and containing various fish deliberately implanted there to increase the beauty of pond. In the past, this water was used only for rice farmland and plantation irrigation purpose.

Umbul Ponggok was managed by Village-Owned Enterprises (Indonesian: *Badan Usaha Milik Desa*, thereafter called BUMDes) established by Ponggok Village government based on Article 1 point 12 of Klaten Regency's Local Regulation Number 2 of 2009. The regulation explains that *Badan Usaha Milik Desa* (thereafter called BUMDes) is an enterprise established by the village in the attempt of improving the village income [8]. BUMDes Tirta Mandiri was established on December 15, 2009. It can be said that BUMDes Tirta Mandiri has successfully managed *Umbul Ponggok* by optimizing the potencies existing in the *Umbul* because the outcome of management can increase the Local Original Income (Indonesian: *Pendapatan Asli Daerah*, thereafter called PAD) [9]. As a water-based tourist village, the Village Government hopes that Ponggok Villagers can live independently with the abundant water supply in their village. Thus, *Umbul Ponggok* can exert positive effect on Ponggok villagers, particularly improving economy and making the people prosperous [8].

Umbul Ponggok affects all elements of society involved in it; tourism development of course affects the community's sustainability, particularly the social change experienced by the people around *Umbul Ponggok*. Studied sociologically in Robert H. Lauer's social change theory, this social change is the one occurring in the community's life involving all aspects of its life [10]. Social structure and system, value, and norm have been approved and held on by the community. This social change will be involved

continuously along with technology development and community's life interaction. Similarly, Harwan Dharma states that social change is something unconsciously occurring continuously in Tosari Village community and make the system existing in the community affected by it [11].

This research will discuss about the dynamics of Umbul Ponggok management and the development of tourism in Umbul Ponggok. The urgency of this research is to see the development of tourism in Umbul Ponggok, which is more directed towards ecotourism or mass tourism. This is because after various problems or dynamics that exist in Umbul Ponggok, this tourism must remain a tourism that is popular with the community and strives to prioritize nature conservation and also empower the surrounding community.

2 Methods

This research used qualitative method by digging information from individuals involved in water-based tourism management in *Umbul Ponggok*, Klaten. It is because the individuals understand better the condition of management and planning in social reality. This research used a phenomenological approach, which is considered more suitable, especially when looking at the models developed by tourist village to view holistic information about the tourism model developed by a tourism village in the context of disaster risk mitigation and ecotourism [12], [13]. In the process of collecting data, the author used a purposive sampling, with the criteria for research subjects being individuals driving water-based tourism villages. The author interviewed the Secretary of Ponggok Village, Planning Coordinator (Indonesian: *Kaur Perencanaan*), Secretary of BUMDes Tirta Mandiri, Head of Rural Tourism Division of BUMDes Tirta Mandiri, Head of Citizen Association (Indonesian: *Rukun Warga*, thereafter called RW) 3, Cleaning Service Officer of *Umbul Ponggok*, MSME sellers in *Umbul Ponggok*, surrounding people, and visitor. In addition, the author observed the habits done by individuals and how the individuals interact dynamically with each other.

In this research, data triangulation process was carried out to see whether or not there is a difference between what the agent said and the result of field data. Thereafter, narrative analytical data will be provided and the model is developed from the result of research conducted. In addition, data analysis was carried out by summarizing and recording all written data to undertake open coding, axial coding, and selective coding later to analyze the management Umbul Ponggok context between eco-based tourism or mass tourism.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Umbul Ponggok known as Bunaken Van Klaten

Water tourism is the featured sector to explore water spring useful to improving the people's quality of life and affecting the economic, social, and cultural lives of community in the tourism region. This tourism management should prioritize the

sustainable development aspect [14]. An attempt that can be taken to realize the sustainable tourism is to establish the tourist village. It also has been realized in Ponggok Village, located in Polanharjo Sub District, Klaten. This village is known as the City with 1001 *Umbul* (water springs) spreading in many village areas. One of tourist destinations that can attract tourists' interest is *Umbul Ponggok* water tour, constituting water tour called Bunaken van Klaten [15]. *Umbul Ponggok* is a water tourist object with swimming pool concept for bathing with 50 meter \times 25 meter dimension, 1.5 m - 2.6 m depth, with water flow rate of 820 liter/s. The early objective of *Umbul Ponggok* establishment was to explore water potency existing in Ponggok Village to be used for tourism activity purpose, three of which are to improve the people's prosperity, to get the developed village ranking, and to reduce unemployment rate [9].

In its development, *Umbul Ponggok* was established based on the Article 33 clause (3) of the 1945 Constitution stating that the land, the waters and the natural resources within shall be under the powers of the State and shall be used to the greatest benefit of the people. To maintain its existence, the manager applies slogan "Sapta Pesona". This is used for the sustainability of tourism to make the people always come and visit to *Umbul Ponggok* and to increase the number of tourists because they feel that the tourist object is safe, orderly, clean, cool, beautiful and friendly, and create impressive memory. The management of *Umbul Ponggok* is fully submitted by the village government to BUMDes Tirta Mandiri. It is in line with the Law Number 6 of 2014 stating that this village's asset should be managed fully to improve the people's prosperity and quality of life. For that reason, the management of *Umbul Ponggok* and likewise, BUMDes fully consist of Ponggok villagers. It is intended to empower the surrounding people and to suppress unemployment rate. In addition, in relation to the investment for *Umbul Ponggok* managed by the BUMDes, 76% of families living in Ponggok village invest 5 million/family as the basic capital with profit share ranging between 5% and 7% per month [16]. However, due to COVID-19 pandemic, some villagers withdrew their investment from *Umbul Ponggok* through BUMDes Tirta Mandiri as they viewed that it was no longer profitable.

Based on the results of interviews and observations, *Umbul Ponggok* is able to optimize its management both in terms of preserving the surrounding environment and also empowering the community. This is proven by the existence of nature conservation efforts to keep the environment sustainable and tourism is also able to open up new job opportunities for village communities. The contribution of surrounding people and the management keeping making innovation and development in *Umbul Ponggok* often face some problems: for example, COVID-19 pandemic forced this tourist object to be closed and led to the non-optimum management of *Umbul Ponggok*. Thus, the development plan is made to optimize the water tour in *Umbul Ponggok* this year to attract the tourist and to restore the condition of *Umbul Ponggok* into the more stable one just like that before pandemic. This condition can be seen from the number of visitors as illustrated in the figure below.

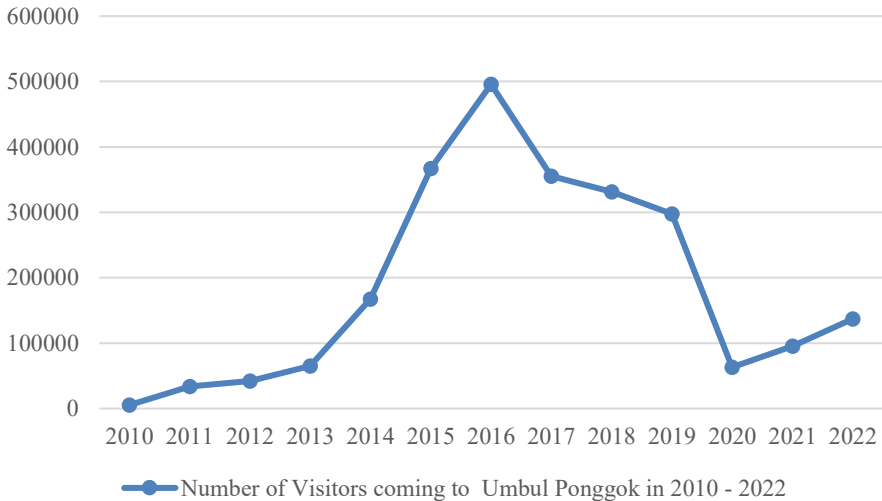


Fig.1 Number of Visitors coming to Umbul Ponggok in 2012 - 2022

Source: BUMDes Tirta Mandiri in 2023

Based on the data shown, it can be seen that there is a decreased in the number of visitors from 297,581 in the terms of tourism management in 2019 to 62,983 in 2020. It is because the incidence of Covid-19 pandemic required *Umbul Ponggok* to stop any activities related to water tour. Following the end of pandemic and when the people began to do their activities again, *Umbul Ponggok* reopened, and in the number of visitors increased to 95,562 in 2021 and 137,197 in 2022. Considering this, *Umbul Ponggok* potentially keeps attracting the visitors and developing tourism for the development and the advance of *Umbul Ponggok*.

3.2 The Dynamic of Umbul Ponggok Management Tourism

The management of *Umbul Ponggok* always attempts to conserve the natural environment. It is indicated with the people affiliated with the management of water tourist object realizing that natural resource is God's gift that should be preserved for its existence. People do not want to enjoy the natural resource themselves without giving their offspring equal opportunities to enjoy it. Therefore, people always attempt to do the best for the sake of conserving the nature they have, in this case, the water conservation in *Umbul Ponggok* in the future.

The management attempt to conserve water in the slopes of Mounts Merapi and Merbabu to keep conserving the water. Water getting out from the source or *umbul* in *Umbul Ponggok* is the groundwater coming from Mounts Merapi and Merbabu. In addition, the water flow rate is comparable to the water released, almost 820 l/s. Thus, the number of visitors coming to enjoy and to utilize the facilities existing in *Umbul Ponggok* will not harm the balance of underwater ecosystem.

Water spring flows continuously in *Umbul Ponggok*, but the management keeps maintaining the cleanliness of the pond by means of removing the moss once a week, exactly on Friday, called Clean Friday (Indonesian: *Jumat Bersih*) program, cleaning the leaves or other rubbishes that can disturb the underwater activities done everyday, and doing big sanitation once a year. Meanwhile, to maintain the surrounding environment, the management routinely clean the scattered rubbishes, including either fallen leaves or rubbished disposed haphazardly by the irresponsible visitors. Considering the result of observation, the cleaning service officers clean the areas out of the pond routinely at any time to keep them clean.

Evaluation on the facilities existing in *Umbul Ponggok* is also done by the management to see the risk of water tour in the future. Today, there are some facilities in *Umbul Ponggok* that can be enjoyed by the visitors, including among others: underwater photography, snorkeling, diving, and underwater walker. Ninja Warrior and Flying Board facilities have ever been provided there, but the high incidence rate during playing Ninja Warrior and the presence of governmental policy due to COVID-19 applying 3M (wearing mask, washing hand, and social distancing) made the management remove the facilities attractive to the visitors. In addition, the management decided to remove Flying Board considering the ecological aspect, because the presence of such facility makes the water cloudy because the natural sand underneath goes up and makes the result of underwater photography less good.

Another interesting attempt taken by the management, in addition to maintaining natural conservation in developing *Umbul Ponggok*, is to construct tourist object with education concept. The management gives the visitors an opportunity of learning swimming, basic technique of diving, water observation, and many other things in *Umbul Ponggok* freshwater pool. It is conducted through collaboration between the management and the nature lover groups coming from universities existing in Yogyakarta and Solo. Additionally, because *Umbul Ponggok* belongs to *Pusur* Rivershed (Indonesian: *Daerah Aliran Sungai*, thereafter called DAS), the management cooperates with Pusur Institute. The management often attends the activities held by Pusur Institute related to forest conservation and campaign about living environment as an attempt of maintaining living environment and nature conservation.

During Covid-19 pandemic, just like other tourist objects, the tourism activities in *Umbul Ponggok* could not operate maximally. Thus, the number of visitors and the income decreased. However, the management remained to attempt to maintain the natural environment of *Umbul Ponggok*. Therefore, despite no income, the management still paid *Umbul Ponggok* maintenance. In addition, the management also united the sellers constituting the people residing around *Umbul Ponggok* in Micro-, Small-, and Medium-Scale Enterprises (MSMEs). It is done for some reasons. Majority sellers trading in the shophouses of *Umbul Ponggok* formerly sold same food and beverage menus. However, the income obtained by one seller is different from another. It triggered social envy. Therefore, the management established MSMEs aiming to unite the sellers and to make their income equal. It is in line with Robert H. Lauer stating that social change occurs based on the condition of individual communities and this change occurs on the community's will and change the community's activity in social interaction.

What have been done by Ponggok Villagers has brought great change. Ponggok village formerly belonging to the left-behind village now becomes one of richest villages in Klaten. It is inseparable from the role of villagers in the empowerment activity held by BUMDes Tirta Mandiri. Socialization has been given to Ponggok Villagers to maximize potency the Ponggok Village has. Housewives formerly belonging to pre-prosperous community due to inadequate income now can work in MSME. It proves that the existence of *Umbul Ponggok* brings great change to the community's life. Thus, there is almost no unemployment in Ponggok Village today. The change in the livelihood corresponding to the time condition also can increase income and thereby can improve the people's welfare [17].

The willingness to work together to manage *Umbul Ponggok* as water tourist object prioritizing more ecotourism concept than mass tourism is a social capital the Ponggok Villagers have to enable its village to maintain the natural sustainability existing. It is in line with Hanifan arguing that the people have consciousness to establish good relation and to cooperate with each other to support the progress of asset that will benefit the life of the community itself [18]. This management of *Umbul Ponggok* always prioritizes ecological aspect as the water tourist object prioritizing more ecotourism concept in the future that is responsible and attempts to mitigate any risk that will exert adverse effect on environment and prioritizes the benefit to both local people and visitors. The *Umbul Ponggok* development plan to optimize its existence in the public is done through constructing meeting room and cafe with live music. It is also in line with the Vision of Ponggok Village today "Conserved Prosperous Ponggok" meaning that in addition to making the surrounding people prosperous, the nature existing in Umbul Ponggok will be kept conserved. This management of *Umbul Ponggok* can be comprehended through ecotourism concept because all activities in their development prioritize environmental aspect and natural conservation in order to maintain its sustainability and to involve contribution and empowerment of surrounding people as an attempt of making them prosperous.

4 Conclusion

Umbul Ponggok is a water-based tourist object prioritizing more ecotourism aspect than mass tourism. It can be seen from the presence of the management's policy prioritizing ecological aspect in each development done. In managing Umbul Ponggok, the management empowers the Ponggok villagers to suppress poverty and unemployment rates. The management always attempts to do development adding other facilities that can attract and increase the number of visitors. Additionally, the management also designs risk anticipation and disaster mitigation over the facilities to be constructed to protect the visitors' safety and security. In its management, some polemics occur, for example, due to the pandemic, some people withdrew their investment from *Umbul Ponggok*. In this case, an attempt should be taken to make the people aware of participating again in supporting the development of *Umbul Ponggok*. Viewed from the management aspect, transparent and accountable reporting should be

made related to the financial administrative management to maintain the villager's trust in the management for the sake of *Umbul Ponggok* advance.

Until today, *Umbul Ponggok* evidently can rise from the adversity due to Covid-19. Although in 2020 *Umbul Ponggok* stopped any activities related to water tour leading to the decrease in the number of visitors, in 2021 and 2022 it could rise and attract the visitors' interest as indicated with the increase in the number of visitors post-pandemic. In the future, *Umbul Ponggok* devises to construct meeting room and modern cafe to perform live music without abandoning the natural tourism sector constituting the basic icon of *Umbul Ponggok*. It is intended to optimize its existence in wide circles. Considering this, *Umbul Ponggok* potentially conducts ecology-based tourism development that still considers natural conservation and community empowerment. This research is limited to the analysis on the development of *Umbul Ponggok* as ecotourism that can maintain natural concept and deal with the risk existing, and maintain its existence in Indonesian tourism. The author expects that further research will be conducted focusing on the *Umbul Ponggok* in relation to its ability of elaborating and solving the problems existing.

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